THE GOLDEN STOOL AND THE ELEPHANT TAIL: AN ESSAY ON WEALTH IN ASANTE[1]

Ivor Wilks, NORTHWESTERN UNIVERSITY

I. INTRODUCTION

The ethnographic literature on Asante, so remarkably comprehensive in many respects, is singularly devoid of references to money. R. S. Rattray, whose studies of Asante kinship, law, religion and art are beyond compare (Rattray, 1923, 1927, 1929), was perhaps conditioned by his own background to regard a concern with money as indelicate, and the topic as one unworthy of sustained treatment. As Von Laue has recently commented of Rattray,

> his ethnographic version has many blind spots. The live, future-oriented trends were shut out, as were the dynamic forces in the past which had created the Ashanti Empire.

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> A reader of his volumes wonders by what institutions and energies that empire was sustained . . . (Von Laue, 1976: 52–54).

Be that as it may, it is quite apparent that the Asante unequivocally acknowledged, and acknowledge, money as one of the pillars of the social order. *Sika ne ohene,* "Money is king," is a well-known Asante aphorism; it was cited by Asante dissidents in 1894 to sustain their argument that effective political power must be founded on wealth.[2] *Sika sene biribiara nsen bio* attests to a similar perception: "Nothing is as important as money." *Odehye nhyehye na sika na ehyehye,* "Not nobility but money makes a person famous," tersely values achievement over ascription. And, to cite one further example, *Odehye wonnoa wonni, na sika ne asem,* "You cannot cook and eat nobility; money is what it is all about."[3]

This paper is an empirical and not a theoretical one. It is concerned with the description of specific features of the nineteenth-century political economy, and it expands and in some respects corrects the brief treatment of the subject in *Asante in the Nineteenth Century* (Wilks, 1975:692–696). Certain aspects of the monetary system are first briefly described. A number of observations are then offered on the intricate relationship between money and office, as mediated by trade and the proprietorship over land and people. An account of the institutionalization of levels of prosperity is presented, and an attempt made to characterize the way in which the nature of wealth was perceived within the wider system of precapitalist Asante values. Finally, attention is drawn to certain general features of the structure of trade and production in Asante, in order to locate more precisely the genesis of wealth within society.

II. MONEY IN ASANTE

In Asante the term *sika* means "gold," and by extension, "money." By an ordinance of 1889 the British demonetized gold in the Gold Coast Colony,[4] and this legislation was extended to Asante after its annexation as a Crown Colony in 1901. Until then the circulating medium in Asante had been gold dust, *sika futuro.* The elaborate system of reckoning the value of gold dust by weight has now been admirably analysed by Garrard (1972–73, *passim*), who shows it to be based upon the Islamic *mithqal* and *uqiya,* subsequently modified to accommodate the Portuguese ounce and later the ounce troy. The weights *(mmrammo),* spoons *(nsaawa),* scoops *(mfamfa),* scales *(nsania),* and other appliances of the system, frequently of much aesthetic appeal, have long attracted the attention of the scholar (see most recently, Menzel, 1968) and also, regrettably, the avarice of the dealer.

Gold in forms other than gold dust was not regarded strictly as money, since ease of negotiability was lacking. The point was made by Bonnat, who spent four years in Kumase in the early 1870s:

> In Asante as elsewhere, gold is found in nugget and ingot form. . . . and if gold [from there] arrives in Europe as dust, it is because in this form it constitutes the currency *(monnaie courante)* of the country, and ingots and nuggets are smelted and reduced to gold dust to facilitate commerce. At Kumase only, there are more than a hundred workers exclusively engaged in this industry . . . (Bonnat, 1876:2).

In fact, legislation existed to oblige Asante gold prospectors to send any nuggets found to the capital, Kumase. In return the prospector received the value of the nugget in gold dust, less a commission taken by the Treasury and in part applied, it may be assumed, to the expenses of the "Mint" (Wilks, 1975:421 and note). Gold dust was used in even petty transactions,[5] and other than in some of the more distant provinces the use of alternative currencies was discouraged. Thus, according to one reliable mid-nineteenth-century report, the circulation of cowries was forbidden by law "under very severe penalties" (Cruickshank, 1853, II: 45).

Gold dust appears to have been endemically in short supply in Asante throughout the nineteenth century. This resulted in part from the nature of the Asante trade with the European commercial houses on the Gold Coast: the money, with which Asante purchases of manufactured produce were made, was shipped away as bullion to Europe. It also arose in part from the Asante propensity to have gold dust melted down to make items of personal adornment, and in part from the even more general tendency within society to hoard gold in any form (a matter to which further reference will be made below). The circulation of money within Asante was, moreover, uneven; that is, it was relatively available in Kumase and other large towns, where it was essential to the urban economy, and relatively unavailable (and sometimes nonavailable) in the villages, where it was not essential to a rural economy still largely involved in production for use.

It was one result of the shortage of money in Asante that it was also very expensive, that is, the rate of interest on loans was extraordinarily high. In the early nineteenth century the rate was fixed at 33⅓ percent per month of forty-two days (Bowdich, 1819: 257; Hutton, 1821: 318). No data have yet been compiled to permit a study of short-term fluctuations, but in the later part of the century the standard rate had apparently fallen to 50 percent per half year. There is a reference, however, to the rate in Kumase soaring at one time to a staggering 20 percent per ten days;[6] this was probably a consequence of the British military occupation of the capital in 1896, when the Asante economy was subjected to the most severe constraints.

Another result of the endemic shortage of gold dust is to be seen in the existence in Asante of counterfeit—known as *sika bone* or "bad gold." It consisted of an admixture of gold dust and fine filings *(dutu)* of either brass or silver. An edict promulgated at the very beginning of the eighteenth century, one of the *Seventy-Seven Laws of Okomfo Anokye,* decreed the death penalty for the circulation of counterfeit (Kyerematen, 1966: 228ff). Reference is still made in Asante to the unusual case of the Akuroponhene Gyamfi Kwadwo, who purported during his lifetime to be a man of much wealth. He died in the later 1820s, but when his estate was appraised for death duties it was found to consist largely of counterfeit. The Asantehene Osei Yaw (1824–1833) ordered the corpse of Gyamfi Kwadwo to be exhumed; it was placed on trial, pronounced guilty, and beheaded.[7] A Kumase goldsmith convicted of counterfeiting in 1867 received the lesser, though in his case more painful, punishment of having his ears cut off.[8] Yet it is arguable that such cases were only prosecuted when they involved attempts to pass counterfeit into the public treasury, in settlement of taxes, fines, interest on loans, and the like. Otherwise counterfeit, although not welcomed by the ordinary citizen, appears nonetheless to have circulated quite extensively. In view of the high prices of commodities in Asante (and of the shortage of gold dust), it is likely that the rigorous application of the law on counterfeit to private transactions would have led to a substantial decline in the volume of business. Indeed, even the Treasury might make disbursements in counterfeit. When British troops ransacked the Asantehene's palace in 1874, it was reported that the loot included "several bags of fine brass-dust, which we [the British] had taken for gold-dust, but which afterwards turned out to be the spurious article used by the king to mix with real gold-dust when he makes payments" (Brackenbury, 1874, II: 267). Such payments in counterfeit were made most commonly, perhaps, for the purchase of European manufactured goods at the markets of the Gold Coast. As late as 1894 Asantes living in Cape Coast urged the Governor to expel Osei Kwaku, a fiscal officer of the Asantehene, "so that the town may be free from bad gold" (Wilks, 1975(a): 60).

Money—gold dust—was frequently accumulated by Asante citizens[9] and, for reasons which will become apparent later, was exhibited on every appropriate occasion. On his death in or about 1814, the *okyeame* Boakye Yam Panin was reported to have left over 20 gallons of gold dust, and upon the disgrace of the acting Anantahene Apea Nyanyo in 1817, his sequestered estate included, apparently, some 12 gallons (Bowdich, 1819: 319). The Asantehene himself, as richest of all the citizens, also set the fashion in display: among his many attendants on public occasions were those who carried the *apem nnaka,* or "chests of a thousand [peredwans]." As Huppenbauer noted of his reception in Kumase in 1881, "these

small chests, of which five were carried past, should each contain roughly 200,000 francs in purest gold dust. They are so heavy (roughly 140 lbs.), that to each small chest is allotted a number of slaves, who take turns in carrying it" (Huppenbauer, 1914: 46).

It was also considered *à la mode* in Asante to have one's gold dust cast into ornamental forms. The custom afforded scope for the aesthetic sensibilities while offering some protection against theft. It was also a source of public revenue since, certainly in the early nineteenth century, a tax of 20 percent had to be paid on all gold dust thus removed from circulation (Bowdich, 1819: 320). Again the Asantehene set the pace; yearly, it was reported in 1819, "the royal gold ornaments are melted down . . . and fashioned into new patterns, as novel as possible. This is a piece of state policy very imposing on the populace, and the tribatary [*sic*] chiefs who pay but an annual visit" (Bowdich, 1819: 279). Nothing, in fact, more impressed visitors to Kumase in the nineteenth century than the ostentatious displays of gold made on every suitable public occasion. "One sees," wrote Huppenbauer of 1881, "the Asantes exerting themselves to dazzle the stranger, by the display of gold and riches, in order to convey to him a high conception of their wealth and power" (1914: 46).

That the accumulation of gold, whether as dust or in worked form, was the most evident measure of a citizen's wealth should not obscure the fact that the Asante were keenly aware of the reproductive uses of money. *Wonni sika a, anka wofre no nhwea kwa,* it is said: "If gold was not made use of, then one would simply call it sand." And again, *Sika nko adidi nsan mma kwa,* "Money is not put out to come back with no profit."[10] The premium set upon the command of business skills, on the ability to reproduce money, is well illustrated in Bowdich's account of the procedure with regard to functionaries in early stages of their careers. "It is a frequent practice of the King's," wrote Bowdich, "to consign sums of gold to the care of rising captains." Such loans were repayable after two or three years, when the functionary had to demonstrate that he had used the principal sum to establish a level of personal wealth commensurate with the dignity of his office. Bowdich noted that such loans were usually applied to trade, but, should the functionary "have no good traders among his dependents (for if he has there is no difficulty) usury and worse resources are countenanced . . . " If the functionary failed to convince the Asantehene, at the time designated for repayment of the loan, of his financial well-being, then, as Bowdich remarked, "his talent is thought too mean for further elevation" (Bowdich, 1819: 295).

The promotion of trade by a form of public financing was the subject of other notices later in the century. Writing of the Asante economy in the second half of the nineteenth century, for example, the Fante lawyer J. E. Casely Hayford remarked,

> Every fortieth day the *Adayi* custom fell. It was a time of national festival and general rejoicing. The King on this occasion distributed among his several chiefs, according to their rank, large sums of money. They were not supposed to use the money for their own self-indulgence, but they were expected, like the stewards in the parable, to trade with the money of their own master, so that he who had received seven peregwans might add seven peregwans thereto, and render a due account when called upon to do so; though, as a matter of fact, it was seldom that an account was called for. In this way the State naturally encouraged thrift, and in olden days it was quite common to see thousands of Ashantis coming down regularly to the coast and buying goods for their masters, which in turn found their way into the very heart of Africa (Casely Hayford, 1903: 28).

Some further detail appeared in a Gold Coast newspaper account of 1900:

> . . . the Chiefs of Kumasi acted as Mercantile Agents for the King, each receiving from 500 to 1000 pereguines yearly which they in turn distributed to their Subchiefs or Captains and other subjects, who took it to the coast for goods which they took into the interior; and made thereby fabulous profits: they rendered account to the King at the end of each year. With these resources, there is no wonder that they were immensely rich and could afford to meet the exactions of the King who knew well their various wealth (*The Gold Coast Aborigines*, xvi, No. 115, June 30, 1900, p. 3).

The peregwan, the highest denomination in daily use in Asante, was equivalent to 2.25 ounces of gold dust.

Gold accumulated, whether as gold dust or in worked form, may be regarded as a form of savings; it was a mark of secured prosperity. Gold used in the promotion of trade is to be seen, perhaps, as a form of finance capital; it was a mark of risk-taking entrepreneurship. But there was, beyond these, a class of financial transactions in Asante which has to be viewed as some form of investment. Quite apparently, the profits of office and trade were frequently sunk into the purchase of people, and of the land necessary for (at least) their support. In the early nineteenth century Bowdich made several mentions of the matter. His observation led him to emphasize the economic returns from such investments, in terms of the production of food stuffs to satisfy urban demands. Thus he remarked on the use of slaves, "to create plantations in the more remote and stubborn tracts; from which their labour was first to produce a proportionate supply to the household of their Chief, and afterwards an existence for themselves . . . " (Bowdich, 1821: 18; 1821(a): 55). Bowdich himself suggested to Asante entrepreneurs—"the more enterprising and reflecting natives"—the profitability of turning to cotton production. "I urged upon them," he wrote, "that they must clear the ground, form plantations, and superintend the labour of their slaves . . . " But the Asante showed no

interest in the matter. Possessing, in Bowdich's words, "a large surplus of income daily accumulating," they pointed out quite explicitly that the structure of their foreign trade made it unnecessary to diversify local production (Bowdich, 1819: 336–337). The theses of dependency and underdevelopment were not unknown ones even by the 1810s, and Bowdich would not have felt puzzlement if he associated the Asante view of their economy with David Hume's generalization about other precapitalist societies published almost seventy years earlier:

> . . . in most nations, foreign trade has preceded any refinement in home manufactures, and given birth to domestic luxury. The temptation is stronger to make use of foreign commodities, which are ready for use, and which are entirely new to us, than to make improvements on any domestic commodity, which always advance by slow degrees, and never affect us by their novelty. The profit is also very great, in exporting what is superfluous at home, and what bears no price, to foreign nations, whose soil or climate is not favourable to that commodity. Thus men become acquainted with the *pleasures* of luxury and the *profits* of commerce . . . (Hume, *Of Commerce,* 1752).

Money invested in people and land yielded, *pace* Bowdich, some immediate economic returns in the form of foodstuffs for the consumption of the owner. Surpluses were presumably sold in the urban markets. It would, however, be imprudent to see in the system the beginnings of capitalist agriculture. The general tenor of the evidence is such as to suggest that the principal return looked for in such investment was a social one: that is, to acquire one's own *nkoa*—persons (whether free or unfree in law) whose services one could directly command—was to be seen quite manifestly to be upwardly mobile in society. In 1925 the Kumase Akyeamehene, Kwasi Nuama, a highly informed authority on nineteenth-century practices, singled out, as a key attribute of high status, the possession of *gyaasefo,* that is, of *nkoa* or retainers sufficiently numerous to permit a significant degree of role specialization in the forms of service provided. "In the olden days," Kwasi Nuama testified,

> I might have a child and make him an Asafohene ["captain"] controlling slaves [*nkoa*] whom I would obtain and give him. I might see the entire population of a village being tendered for sale and I might buy them and put them under the Asafohene whom I had created. Such an Asafohene [with the *nkoa*] would be my Gyasi [Gyaase]. . . . It was quite common for them [chiefs] to sell their lands, people, and entire villages and even their rank and become subordinate to the purchaser.[11]

Many transactions conforming more or less closely to the Kwasi Nuama paradigm are on record, whether involving the creation of new estates in

people and land or the transfer of existing estates by sale or mortgage *(awowa).*[12] A realistic rating of the importance of the services provided by the *gyaasefo* is perhaps that produced by a group of Adanse chiefs in 1906, in a protest against the colonial administration's proposal to free all slaves. Should that occur, they argued,

> then no more town in Ashanti . . . all our drums [*akyeremadefo*], blowing horns [*asokwafo*] swords [*afenasoafo*], elephants tail [*ahoprafo*] Basket carrying [*asoamfo*] and farming works are done by these . . .[13]

III. WEALTH AND OFFICE

Many features of early historic Asante society reflect the circumstances of the kingdom's origins in warfare: in the wars of consolidation in the late seventeenth century against the Suntireso, Tafo, Kaase and others; in the war of liberation against Denkyira at the turn of the century; and in the wars of expansion of the first half of the eighteenth century. Most apparently, the structure of political office was virtually identical with the structure of military command (see, e.g., Rattray, 1929: 77). Correspondingly, access to office was most closely linked with distinguished military service. *Obarima woye no dom ano, na wonye no fie,* runs what is probably a very old Asante maxim, "A man is made facing the enemy, not in the home."[14] The highly prestigious title of *obirempon* was one with which such service might be rewarded. The case of the Dwansahene Kodie, as remembered in the orally transmitted traditions of the stool, may be cited as characteristic of the early period:

> . . . it was during the reign of Nana Kodie that Dwansa became famous. This was during the time of the Denkyira war with Ntim Gyakari. Nana Kodie, it is said, was responsible for carrying the gunpowder of Asantehene. After the war with Denkyira the Dwansahene, Nana Kodie, was elevated to the status of an Obirempon. It is said that prior to this war Okomfo Anokye predicted that the carrier of the gunpowder of the nation would surely become barren. But this chief preferred to be sterile rather than lose the dignity of the nation. So after the war with the Denkyirahene the King presented the Dwansahene, Nana Kodie, with elephant tails and Ekyem [Shield], and a golden calabash.[15]

By the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, as trade rather than empire increasingly came to dominate national life, so office became more and more closely linked with commercial rather than military skills. The case of Yamoa Ponko is a well-remembered one in Asante, as an example of the acquisition of the ancient title of *obirempon* through business acu-

men rather than valour. Born in Asante around 1730, of Denkyira immigrant stock, as a young man Yamoa Ponko built up a fortune by trading in the northern hinterlands of Asante. Probably in the early 1760s he purchased land and people from the Ahenkurohene Apea Panin, for 70 peregwans, and founded the new village of Sekyedumase. Laying the basis for a subsequent claim to office, Yamoa Ponko apparently presented the new estate to the Ankaase Stool—and duly became Ankaasehene when that position became vacant in or about 1765. Only a year or two later, Yamoa Ponko acquired the higher title of Kumase Kyidomhene by the outlay of a further 30 peregwans. Throughout the remainder of his career he maintained his trading interests, but continued to divert at least part of his profits to the purchase of further people. In the 1780sYamoa Ponko received recognition as *obirempon*, and had the further gratification of presenting his favorite son, Gyesi Kwame, with one hundred subjects and making him an *asafohene* of the Kyidom Stool.[16]

The nature of the intimate connection which came to exist in Asante, between money, investment, and advancement, is well illustrated from the period between the British assumption of direct civil administration of Asante affairs in 1901, and the introduction of a system of indirect rule in 1935. Few matters absorbed so much of the time and energy of the colonial administrators in the period, as that of succession to office, and in the innumerable "stool disputes" which occurred, no feature so constantly eluded the understanding of the administrators as that of the intricate interplay of considerations of ancestry on the one hand, and money on the other. The case of the Dadiesoaba Stool of Kumase is instructive in this context. It became vacant with the death of Kwabena Sekyere in 1923. Almost immediately there occurred what Chief Commissioner Maxwell of Asante described as "the usual bickering whereby a Royal and a rich man contested supremancy [*sic*], the latter spending much money and the former relying on his noble lineage for success . . . "[17] In theory the choice of successor should have dictated itself, since the Dadiesoaba Stool is indubitably an hereditary one, with rights of succession vested, since the early eighteenth century, in the matrilineal descendants of Ampomaa Tim.[18] But Maxwell instructed the District Commissioner of Kumase to prepare a genealogical chart of the previous occupants, and found the result puzzling "in that it reveals that matrilineal descent is practically ignored." In fact, of the fourteen occupants of the office included on the genealogy, only five or perhaps six were "royals" of the stool.[19] Clearly it did not follow, from the *de jure* classification of a stool as an hereditary one, that the *de facto* occupants of the stool would be its "royals."

The 1916 Kwame Kyem, a prominent citizen of Kumase avid in pursuit of office, had written to the then Acting Chief Commissioner of Asante to

communicate, as he described it, "very important information respecting the rules that governed the succession to stools in Coomassie, my object being to remove from Your Honour's mind the belief into which Your Honour has been misled that no person outside the family of an occupant of a stool was allowed to succeed him." Kwame Kyem had earlier unsuccessfully advanced his candidacy for the Bantama Stool, and was concerned to show that his failure to achieve high office arose from factors quite other than his lack of genealogical qualifications:

> Most of the Coomassie Chiefs came to me and asked for heavy sums of money in order to recommend me for the Bantama Stool. . . . I did not pay what they required because it was too much and would leave me nothing with which to improve the stool if I got it.[20]

Kwame Kyem had also recently been involved in a bid for the Akyempem Stool. Recognizing that surviving sons of the Asantehene Kwaku Dua Panin (1834–1867) had the strongest claims on the office, since it was intended for "princes," Kwame Kyem remarked, "they are poor now." By contrast, he noted, he could bring to the office three stores or houses, 8,000 cocoa trees, menservants and relatives (number unspecificed), and thirty of his own children "that will help on home matters."[21]

In the period of colonial rule before 1935, a tendency was present for those who controlled an office—the "kingmakers" of a stool—to work for the enrichment of the office at the expense of the individual office holder. An interesting case is that of Owusu Bannahene, a wealthy businessman who was asked to become Ankaasehene and Kyidomhene in 1931. Occupant of the same office, then, as the Yamoa Ponko whose career has been briefly outlined above, Owusu Bannahene's experience was a much different one. Having placed his wealth at the disposal of the Ankaase Stool (as Yamoa Ponko had some 170 years earlier), proceedings to remove Owusu Bannahene from office were almost immediately started, and he was forced to abdicate in October 1933. "The Ankase Elders," it was minuted, "have been using the Stool as a source of Revenue by selling it when vacant and destooling the Chief after a short period."[22] It is unclear whether the practice was one that had resulted from the absence of traditional restraints upon the abuse of authority during the period of direct colonial rule, or whether it was indeed one that had its roots in an earlier period. Certainly it was the case that the British administrators, working with various stereotypes concerning the nature of "primitive" societies, tended to assume that the political use of money was a twentieth-century phenomenon, and one moreover that was not compatible with the maintenance of traditional values. In 1922, for exam-

ple, Chief Commissioner Harper commented on the "weakening of chiefly authority" in Asante, and remarked, "the extended use of money and the exclusion of barter make it possible to amass wealth, and the accumulation of wealth is mainly a personal affair and enhances the importance of the individual."[23] Yet only a year earlier two senior Kumase functionaries, Akyeamehene Kwasi Nuama and Saamanhene Kwabena Kokofu, had unambiguously testified to the importance of wealth in earlier times:

> The custom in vogue before the King of Ashanti was taken away [i.e., before 1896] was that if a man who had wealth was put on a stool he accepted the appointment on the understanding that he would add his wealth to that of the stool he was going to occupy, and in the event of destoolment he forfeited everything to the stool. . . . Chiefs were allowed to trade with a view to increase the revenue of the stool.[24]

The converse of the importance placed upon wealth and advancement in Asante is to be found in the stringency of the views on poverty. *Ohia ye gyimi,* it is said, "poverty is foolishness," and *Ohia ye adammo,* "poverty is madness."[25] Such judgments are not to be understood as directed against the rural or even the urban poor as such—the underprivileged classes within society—but rather against those who had access to the rewards of business and office but nevertheless failed to achieve prosperity. The opposition, in other words, between *ahonyadee* or "wealth," and *ohia* or "poverty," is to be understood as a commentary not upon social inequality, but rather upon success and failure. It will be seen below, that the man (or woman) of self-acquired property was regarded as—and indeed was—the benefactor of the community by virtue of the system of death duties which, however unpopular it became, was only abandoned at the end of the nineteenth century. Lavish funerals were made for the wealthy, in recognition of their contribution to the national well-being[26]—*rites de passage* into the land of the ancestors from which they would continue to prompt the living to emulate their example. For those who died with more liabilities than assets, by contrast, no full funeral obsequies were performed (Bowdich, 1821a: 56): the status of ancestor was withheld. In 1817 Bowdich reported the case of a suitor before the Exchequer Court in Kumase, who was unable to discharge a debt of 16 ounces in money; the sum was commuted to a payment of twenty male subjects (Bowdich, 1819: 296). For the person of wealth to have to sell (or mortgage) subjects or land was, in Asante terms, the beginnings of the slide into bankruptcy and, if not halted, into poverty. Investments were being liquidated to meet an immediate monetary deficit: *Ohia na ema odehye ye akoa,* "a royal becomes a subject through poverty."[27] The

importance of this for an understanding of the nature of the market in land and people in Asante will be apparent, and the topic will be returned to below.

IV. THE ELITES OF WEALTH

On the basis of his observations of Kumase society in 1817, Bowdich became strongly aware of the degree of social stratification present. Of the many indicators of this—housing, diet, hygiene, toiletry, marriage, and so forth[28]—he commented most fully on matters of the household economy:

> . . . the higher class could not support their numerous followers, or the lower their large families, in the city, and therefore employed them in plantations (in which small crooms [villages] were situated) generally within two or three miles of the capital, where their labours not only feed themselves, but supply the wants of the chief, his family, and more immediate suite. The middling orders station their slaves for the same purpose, and also to collect fruit and vegetables for sale, and when their children become numerous, a part are generally sent to be supported by these slaves in the bush (Bowdich, 1819: 323–324).[29]

Bowdich's "higher class" would appear to refer to the wealthy citizens, high office holders for the most part, whose *gyaasefo* or "retainers" supported them; his "middling orders" to aspirant citizens[30] in process of creating, through the utilization of slaves, their own *gyaasefo;* and his "lower class" to those who perforce ensured their survival by the use of family labour. If Bowdich may be understood as suggesting that the commanding morality of metropolitan society was one of upward mobility based on wealth, then he was undoubtedly correct. Had Bowdich remained in Kumase a few months longer, he would have observed that upward mobility was an institutionalized process. . . .

The broad category of those who attained wealth in Asante was known as the *sikafo,* "the monied people."[31] This category subsumed the smaller group of those who acquired fortunes sufficiently substantial for them to seek formal recognition of their achievement. Of these, those able to demonstrate that they had acquired through their own enterprise a modest fortune of 125 peregwans might, with the approval of the Asantehene, obtain the entitlement of wearing in public a specially designed and woven cloth known as *nyawoho,* "you have become rich."[32] It would seem that it was after the acquisition of such a resource in gold dust that the aspirant (and wise) citizen would begin to invest in people and land. The title to be acquired thereby was that of *asafohene,* an ancient one originally and

exclusively meaning "a war captain." But the title was available at different levels depending upon the number of subjects acquired. As noticed above, Yamoa Ponko gifted to his son, Gyesi Kwame, 100 subjects, and thereby Gyesi Kwame acquired the comparatively low ranking dignity of an *asafohene* of the Kyidom Stool. By contrast, in late 1861 or early 1862 the Akyempemhene Owusu Koko, already occupant of high office in Kumase, nevertheless publicly demonstrated his proprietorship over three thousand subjects—each in possession of a gun—who must be assumed to have represented self-acquired property.[33] An *asafohene* able to show command of at least a thousand subjects was entitled not only to wear the *nyawoho* cloth, but also to have a horse tail switch *(bodua)* carried before him.[34] It was, however, the right to use not the horse tail, but the elephant tail switch *(mena),* which was the most coveted of all honours—and one which carried with it use of the ancient title of *obirempon.*[35]

However many *sikafo* aspired to the award of the elephant tail, relatively few seem to have achieved it. Only three successful claimants have so far been identified with certainty for the nineteenth century, namely, Gyaasewahene Opoku Frefre (died 1826), Ankobeahene Kwaku Tawia (died ca. 1850), and Manwerehene Kwasi Brantuo (died 1865).[36] There must surely have been some others. A description of the ceremony surrounding the award was given by the Akyeamehene Kwasi Nuama in 1925. Since it is the only account of the full admission procedures known to be extant, it will be cited fully:

> Those chiefs who were allowed to use elephant tails were called Abrempons. A chief who lives on his own land with his own subjects is known by the King as Abrempon. An Abrempon must exhibit his wealth publicly by presenting £9 6/- [i.e., 1 peregwan with *mmataho*] to all the Abrempons in Kumase; and 10 peregwans (£80) to the King. He would then go to Tafo and pay £1 6/- to the chief there who would give him an egg to throw against a silk cotton tree. He would then return to Kumasi. He would then go to Essumja Santimanso and buy a carpet (nsa) for £24 [3 peregwans] from the subjects of the Chief there. He must only dance on it and leave it after presenting Essumjahene with another £24. Your going and coming expenses (including the £48) will cost you some 20 peregwans. He would buy an elephant tail from the Assinhene (son of Essumjahene) for £9 6/-. He would tie the elephant tail round the waist of one of his slaves and he must then past [*sic*] round the outskirts of the town lying on the leaves of palm trees which have been strewn around the town, firing at his slave with blank fire from time to time. The slave falls down eventually and he then cuts the string to which the tail is fastened and takes the tail—then the ceremonies are completed, and his people applaud him. Next morning he would get mashed yam mixed with 30 peregwans and be carried on a litter round the town of Kumasi scattering largesse of the yam mixture. On the following morning he would be carried in a litter with all his regalia, his skin plastered with white clay. Then he would fix up a spear at Dwebirim (the market place)

> and challenge those of the same rank to remove it. After this he is called Brempon. On the last day anyone who aspires to the rank of Abrempon takes out the spear and appoints a time for performing the same ceremonies. . . .[37]

The Akyeamehene thus identified six stages in the ceremony. The first, the payments to the *abirempon* of the capital and to the Asantehene, requires little comment. In the early nineteenth century Hutchison noted that the first step was, for obvious reasons, taken only "by those who are in favour with the King, and think themselves safe from palavers."[38] The second and third stages, the visits to Tafo and Asantemanso, involved the candidate in ancient mysteries the nature of which cannot be examined here; suffice to note that Tafo, lying only two to three miles from Kumase, is one of the oldest settlements in the area—already seemingly an important trading center at the beginning of the sixteenth century—and that Asantemanso, lying some twenty miles south of Kumase, is the earliest identifiable center of the Asante peoples: it is, wrote Rattray, perhaps "the most hallowed spot in all their territory" (Rattray, 1923: 121).

The fourth stage of the ceremony, that of the catching of the "elephant," was, by a fortunate chance, once witnessed by W. West on his visit to Kumase with Owusu Ansa in 1862. Although West does not name the candidate, one may be reasonably confident that it was the Kumase Manwerehene, Kwasi Brantuo.[39] On March 29, 1862, West noted the arrival of several dignitaries in Kumase, "to take part in the ceremony, which was that of the display of wealth, by an old chief, in order to be entitled to the honour of having the elephant's tail carried before him; an honour to which only the wealthy can aspire."[40] The actual charade occurred the next day:

> A slave had been selected to enact the part of the elephant. Besmeared all over with chalk, holding in his hand a small tusk, which he occasionally applied to his mouth, and having an elephant's tail attached by a piece of string behind, he was started off; while some forty or fifty men, armed with muskets, and supplied with blank cartridges, followed in pursuit, keeping up an almost constant fire. His elephantship as we were informed, made his way, according to usage, to a small kroom [village] not far from Kumasi, where he fell down as if shot, and lay there until the chief himself appeared to cut off the tail; who, having thus hunted the elephant, and possessed himself of its caudal appendage, was considered, as I suppose, entitled to have it borne before him.[41]

The "kroom" near Kumase at which the chase ended was, seemingly, a parcel of land donated to an aspirant *obirempon* by one or other of the oldest and most senior Kumase stools. Kwasi Brantuo was, in fact, given the Adiebeba lands in 1862 by the Kumase Akwamuhene Akwawua Dente; and Opoku Frefre—whose candidacy will be referred to next—was

awarded the Daakwadwam lands by Akwawụa Dente's forerunner in office, Kwakye Kofi.[42]

The next, and penultimate, stage of the ceremony, that of the public display of wealth, took three days according to West. Again, by good fortune, an excellent account of this formality is extant in the diary of William Hutchison, who observed the display made by the Gyaasewahene Opoku Frefre in November 1817.[43] "It is done," he noted,

> by making their gold in various articles of dress for show. Apokoo, who sent for me before his uproar began, showed me his varieties, weighing upwards of 800 bendas [1,600 oz.] of the finest gold; among the articles, was a girdle two inches broad. Gold chains for the neck, arms, legs, etc. ornaments for for the ancles [*sic*] of all descriptions, consisting of manacles, with keys, bells, chairs [*sic*], and padlocks. For his numerous family of wives, children, and captains, were armlets and various ornaments. A superb war cap of eagle's feathers, fetishes, Moorish charms, etc. Moorish caps, silk dresses, purses, bags, etc. made of monkey skin. Fans, with ivory handles, made of tiger skin, and decorated with silk. New umbrellas made in fantastical shapes, gold swords and figures of animals, birds, beasts, and fishes of the same metal; his drums, and various instruments of music, were covered with tiger skin, with red belts for hanging them. Ivory arrows and bows, covered with silk and skins, and many other weapons of war or fancy, such as the mind in a like situation would devise. . . .[44]

It is some measure of the importance of such displays, that that of Opoku Frefre in 1817 remains the subject of orally transmitted accounts in this century:

> My Nana Poku Frefreh displayed his wealth before the Asantehene and his councillors and as custom prescribes the Asantehene sent his 'Kotoko' scale to him to fill it and he did fill it with an amount of about £240 [30 peregwans]. The Asantehene then sat in state and my Nana Poku Frefreh displayed his wealth before him and was declared or acknowledged a wealthy man.[45]

The sixth and final stage of the ceremony, the planting of the spear in the great market place of Kumase, seemingly represented a symbolic assertion of equality with those whose status in society rested upon their military accomplishments. Accuracy, however, requires that this should be rephrased. In the early eighteenth century, during the Asante wars of expansion, by far the most common route to wealth was through the acquisition of war booty: the spear of the *obirempon*,[46] already an anachronism in terms of weapon technology, nonetheless represented wealth. In the nineteenth century, not least because of the abolition of the maritime slave trade, the sources of wealth shifted from war to commerce, but the symbolism remained encapsulated within the value system

of an earlier age. The memory of that earlier age remained, however, alive in a later one. In 1925 Akyeamehene Kwasi Nuama commented, "a Safohene who has not got money to perform these ceremonies might still attain the rank by conquering an enemy and taking his elephant tail and regalia and becoming an Abrempon on reaching Kumase." But Kwasi Nuama knew well the nature of the nineteenth-century reality; "Abrempons," he added, "could increase in importance by buying from poorer chiefs whole villages to serve them."[47]

For the successful aspirant to the highest rank that wealth alone could procure, certain arrangements remained to be effectuated which involved essentially an exchange of *ahoprafo* or literally "sweepers"—retainers responsible for carrying the elephant tails. In 1817, Bowdich remarked on the current custom:

> These troops of boys who carry the elephants' tails, are the sons of men of rank and confidence: for whenever the King dignifies a subject, with what may be termed nobility, he exchanges some of his own sons or nephews (from eight to fourteen years of age,) for those of the individual, who maintains them, and for whom they perform the same offices, as his own and others do for the King.[48]

To offer insult to those entitled to use the elephant tail apparently carried the same penalty as to offer insult to any of the greater territorial rulers in Asante, namely, death.[49]

The nature of the symbolic association between wealth and the elephant tail is not self-evident, but a tentative explanation may be essayed. The elephant is considered preeminent among the beasts: *esono akyi nni aboa*.[50] It is also said, *esono dua eye, ode saa ara na epra ne ho,* "the elephant's tail is short, but it is able to sweep flies away." The sense is that the elephant did not allow the handicap of a short tail to prevent him from achieving preeminence;[51] thus should the citizen sweep away all obstacles in his or her pursuit of riches. The elephant tail or *mena* is the symbol, in other words, not so much of wealth as such, but rather of the accomplishment and achievement which characterize the acquisitive process. The incumbent of—if the phrase may be used—an elephant tailship, was subject to acute social disapprobation if he dissipated his wealth; few more severe strictures could be levelled at the wealthy citizen than that he "boiled and ate the elephant tail."[52] Not even the Asantehene, however, could revoke the grant of an elephant tail, however dramatic the decline in the fortunes of the grantee.[53] In Asante, unusual achievement is still acknowledged in the phrase, *kum aboa a yede ne dua pra ohene ho,* "killing that animal the tail of which is used to 'sweep' the king."

V. THE POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY OF WEALTH

Among the important symbols of Asante kingship established during the reign of the first Asantehene Osei Tutu (died 1712 or 1717) were the Sika Dwa or "Golden Stool" and the Sika Mena or "Golden Elephant Tail."[54] Basically, the Sika Dwa symbolized the highest level at which political power was exercised *(otumi)*, and the Sika Mena symbolized the highest level at which wealth was appropriated *(ogye)*. The Asantehene was thus both Otumfo, "the powerful one," and Ogyefo, "the taking one."[55] All Asantehenes subsequent to Osei Tutu likewise possessed personal stools decorated with gold, and those of rulers who died in office are consecrated to their memory and kept in the Bampanase Stool House (Kyerematen, 1969: *passim*). Later Asantehenes also possessed their own elephant tails made of gold, and those of fiscally successful rulers are kept in the charge of specially appointed custodians.[56] On public occasions, the stools are carried by members of the *nkonnwasoafo*, and the elephant tails are borne by members of the *ahoprafo*. As is befitting of such symbols of highest office, an aura of considerable mystery surrounds them. It is not the purpose here to inquire into their physical aspects, but rather to essay a tentative description of the relationship of symbol to social reality.

It is necessary first to distinguish that which may be termed, for want of a better word, "natural" authority (as generated within the framework of household, family and lineage) from politico-jural authority; and "natural" property (as represented principally by alodiums in land held by lineages) from all manner of self-acquired wealth. Neither "natural" authority nor "natural" property are of immediate concern here; that is, it is politico-jural authority that is conceived in Asante as regularly flowing *down from* the Golden Stool, and it is self-acquired wealth that is conceived as regularly flowing *up to* the Golden Elephant Tail. The Golden Stool was symbolic of the highest level at which politico-jural authority was exercised within the polity, and the Golden Elephant Tail of the highest level at which wealth was accumulated. The structural complementarity between the political and fiscal spheres is indicated in the schema below. It should be remarked, that the analytically distinct categories of the office holders *(amansohwefo)* and the wealthy *(asikafo)* are, in terms of actual membership, largely overlapping ones; that is, office holders became wealthy through the exercise of their office, and persons of wealth acquired office through the use of their money.

The Golden Stool and the Golden Elephant Tail are the *grundnorms* of the political and fiscal systems, respectively. That is, the hierarchies of superordinate and subordinate political authorities are constituted into one closed system by the institution of the Golden Stool—than which no

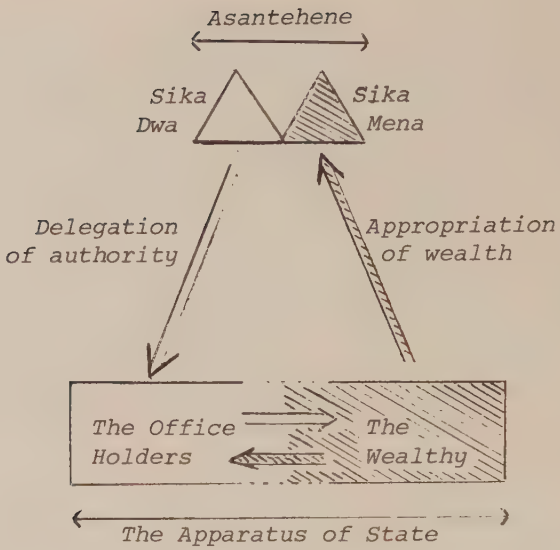

Figure 1. Wealth and Authority in Asante: A Schema

higher level of authority can exist in Asante. Similarly, the relations of appropriation (of surplus, through taxes, tributes, fees, fines, etc.) are constituted into one closed system by the institution of the Golden Elephant Tail—than which no higher level of appropriation can exist in Asante. The Golden Stool and the Golden Elephant Tail thus define two crucial aspects of Asante sovereignty. The nature of the intimate relationship between the two symbols is expressed metaphysically by the Asante, who say that the Sika Mena "enfolds" or "wraps" *(nnuraho)* the Sika Dwa. The same perception is perhaps conveyed by observing that the two sides of the schema of Figure 1 are homologues. One or other side of the diagram may be visualized as rotated through an arc of 180°. Then, first, the *de facto* unity of the systems of authority and finance receives expression, in that both are aspects of the undivided sovereignty exercised by the Asantehene. Secondly, the physical structure of authority is seen to be the same as that of appropriation, in that those to whom authority is lawfully delegated are precisely those who have the right to collect taxes, fines, and so forth. And thirdly, but not least in importance, the continuous and complex interraction between office and wealth serves to identify a key characteristic of Asante governance.

It was a cardinal principle of Asante law that only an Asantehene was permitted to decorate his stool with gold, or to make an elephant tail of gold. Any transgression of the principle was treason, since it constituted a direct challenge to the undivided sovereignty of the Asantehene. The case of Adinkra, ruler of the province of Gyaman, is instructive. In 1811 news

reached Kumase that Adinkra had made a golden stool for himself. A Kumase mission led by Kwame Butuakwa visited Gyaman, and Adinkra was persuaded to surrender the stool.[57] Shortly after, Adinkra made another golden stool. This time all negotiations failed, and the suppression of Adinkra's rebellion only became finally possible with the military invasion of Gyaman in 1818–1819 (Wilks, 1975: 271–272). But while the symbols of Asante sovereignty should not be replicated within Asante, the very same symbols could be replicated for use outside Asante, as a token of the Asantehene's acknowledgement of the coexistent sovereignty of a fellow ruler. Thus, after the negotiation in Kumase of the Anglo-Asante Treaty of March 23, 1820, between Consul J. Dupuis and Asantehene Osei Bonsu, the Asantehene prepared gifts for King George III in London. Among them was "a gold elephant's tail, composed of a thick bunch of wire:- a sort of fan or fly flap, used by the king, or rather to him alone." With the *sika mena* the Asantehene proposed sending attendants for it—*ahoprafo:* "young and handsome people." Much to the Asantehene's perplexity, however, Dupuis declined to accept that integral part of the gift (Dupuis, 1824: 174).

VI. THE STRUCTURE OF APPROPRIATION: DEATH DUTIES

It has been argued that the Sika Mena, or Golden Elephant Tail, was symbolic of the highest level of appropriation in Asante society. The continuous flow of (self-acquired) wealth upwards, from the *sikafo* to the Asantehene—that is, from the many individuals engaged in broadly entrepreneurial activities, to the national treasury—was sustained by a wide range of fiscal techniques. These have been described from different perspectives in a number of works (see, e.g., Rattray, 1929: 107–119; Wilks, 1975: 418–445), and included various forms of taxes, tolls, fees and fines. At the very base of the structure, however, was the system of death duties, which Rattray rightly observed was most important "in order of productiveness" (1929: 107). The system is said to have been introduced into Asante during the reign of Opoku Ware I, that is, between ca. 1720 and 1750 (Reindorf, 1895: 75). Certainly it was a functioning one in the early 19th century, when Bowdich listed "the gold dust of all deceased . . . subjects" first among the sources of revenue (1819: 319), the earliest published notice of the matter. "The King," wrote Bowdich, with reference to self-acquired property,

> is heir to the gold of every subject, from the highest to the lowest. . . . The King contributes to the funeral custom to validate his claim, and usually bestows ten peri-

> guins [*peregwans*] of the gold dust on the successor, (if of a rich man,) who is in all cases liable for the debts of the deceased, though the amount is generally made good to him sooner or later, if he has influence with those about the King, or recommends himself to his notice personally (1819: 254).

Elsewhere Bowdich adds the detail, that it was the custom for the Asantehene to donate the burial cloth for the corpse—"to vindicate his claim as heir (for the use of the state) to all the gold dust of the deceased" (1821a: 25).

Another description of the system was given by M.-J. Bonnat some fifty years later, during the reign of Asantehene Kofi Kakari:

> When a chief dies, all his goods without exception become the property of the King. He names the successor of the deceased, who he selects ordinarily from the family, though he could just as easily choose from among strangers and even from outside the nobility. According to the position which the one elected is called upon to take, the king adds to his inheritance a certain quantity of gold and slaves (*L'Explorateur*, II, 1875–1876: 623).

Both Bowdich and Bonnat are referring to the mechanism of appropriation known as *awunnyade*, which was applicable to the self-acquired movable property of a deceased citizen. It must be distinguished from the tax known as *ayibuade*, one imposed in certain circumstances upon the inheritor of immovable estate, that is, houses and land.[58] *Awunnyade* was not an inheritance tax, but rather the expression in legislation of the fundamental feature of the Asante concept of wealth—symbolized in the *Sika Mena*—that the ultimate beneficiary of all entrepreneurial activity was the nation as personified by the Asantehene. The system of *awunnyade*, in Bonnat's words, "gives to the monarchy immense power and immeasurable riches" (*L'Explorateur*, II, 1875–6: 623). Through the constraints it imposed upon the inheritance of wealth, it also placed a premium upon achievement. *Sika ye fe na opegyafo ye na*, it is said, "money is splendid, but heirs are rare."[59] The Asante concept of the *okaniba*, the good citizen, was of the individual who by the exercise of his, or her, own skills and industry *made* money, and therefore at death became, through the system of death duties, a benefactor of the nation, the Asanteman. It is implicit in this view of society, that the wealthy citizen will take every opportunity conspicuously to display his riches, and to acquire formal recognition of his achievement at whatever level is appropriate: the right to wear the *nyawoho* cloth, or to have the horse tail switch, or, preeminently, the elephant tail, carried before him. The citizen thereby auspiciously gained in life the prestige and respect in fact to be paid for on

his death, when officials of the treasury would value his property and take the death duties.

The wealthy citizen was, in life, continuously aware of the state's transcendent interest in his property. "Our gold, our slaves and our lives are yours," announced the Head of the Exchequer, Opoku Frefre, before the Asantehene in 1817, "and are ready to be delivered up at your command" (Bowdich, 1820). "If the King wanted gold, and they had it," commented the Head of Executioners, Adum Ata, in the same year, "they would give it to him" (Hutchison, in Bowdich, 1819: 416). Declared the counsellor Kwadwo Adusei in 1820, "My gold, my life, my wives, children and slaves all belong to Sai [Osei Bonsu], for he is the great king here" (Dupuis, 1824: 91).[60] Yet it is important to recognize that the Asantehene's exercise of his rights over the property of the citizenry was restrained by the very system of values which generated those rights. The point is well illustrated in the fate of a case which Osei Bonsu, with the encouragement of his counsellors (*akyeame* or "linguists"), sought to bring against one of his officers. "The king," it was reported, "confessing a prejudice against a wealthy captain, his linguists, always inclined to support him, said, 'If you wish to take his stool from him, we will make the palaver'." One leading counsellor, Asante Agyei, nonetheless made a forceful protest against the appropriation of the property of citizens during their lifetimes:

> No, King! that is not good; that man never did you any wrong, you know all the gold of your subjects is yours at their death, but if you get all now, strangers will go away and say, only the King has gold, and that will not be good, but let them say the King has gold, all his captains have gold, and all his people have gold, then your country will look handsome, and the bush people fear you (Dupuis, 1824: 91).

Osei Bonsu was so impressed by the clear statement of principle that he not only dropped the case, but advanced Asante Agyei in rank.[61]

Death duties—*awunnyade*—were, then, the single most important mechanism sustaining the system of appropriation in Asante. The case cited above shows that an Asantehene, attempting in effect to levy death duties before death, could be restrained from doing so by being made aware of the erosive results of such actions upon the system as a whole. But the system as a whole was one the preservation of which was to the advantage of the Asantehene. More inauspicious to the long-term maintenance of the system—and therefore to the survival of the office of Asantehene in its historic form—was the emergence in the course of the nineteenth century of a growing resistance to the institution of death duties, and, to the extent to which this occurred, of rejection of the

traditional view of appropriation as symbolized in the Golden Elephant Tail.

As early as 1817 Bowdich remarked, that death duty "is sometimes anticipated, by a father presenting his children with large sums of gold just before his death." He cited the case—still obviously something of a scandal in Kumase in 1817—of the counsellor Boakye Yam Panin who, before his death in or about 1814, had transferred much of his property to his son Oti Panin; in such circumstances, Bowdich commented, "the son discovers his wealth very deliberately" (1819: 254). An interesting case of tax evasion is on record from the reign of Asantehene Mensa Bonsu (1874–1883). Akua Afriyie, widow of the former Asantehene Osei Yaw Akoto, had buried her valuables—gold nuggets, gold trinkets, and beads—and had instructed her personal servant Adwowa Akosua to reveal the hiding place to her son, the Apesemakahene Oheneba Kofi Bayeyire, but only after her death. Kofi Bayeyire in time thus came into possession of the valuables. Instead of declaring them for the assessment of death duties, however, he commenced selling them (for gold dust) to Akyem and Kwawu traders from the Gold Coast Colony. Seeking to conceal the illegality, Kofi Bayeyire tried to arrange the execution of Adwowa Akosua, the only possible witness against him. Adwowa Akosua, learning of the threat to her life, immediately brought the whole matter to the attention of the authorities in Kumase. Kofi Bayeyire was placed on trial before Asantehene Mensa Bonsu.[62]

Such forms of evasion as the above—transference before death, and straightforward concealment—seemingly became increasingly common as the level of individual wealth rose with the great expansion of the external trade after 1831. In the opinion of thirty-nine Asante businessmen who signed a petition in 1930 against the reintroduction of death duties, by the late nineteenth century the quantity of gold being buried was such as to affect the whole economy:

> . . . before the advent of the British Government into Ashanti, Ashanti man from fear of properties being ransacked by the *Ohene* could not openly declare his wealth but would hide his treasures in the earth and this accounts for the general retrogression in the olden days.[63]

That more complex ways of sheltering money from tax also existed is suggested by a report of 1882 from the Gold Coast Colony:

> A well-known Ashanti trader, who visits Cape Coast regularly to buy stores for barter beyond our protectorate, called on the native representative of a large firm here to

whom he has been known for many years, and begged him to receive in trust a large quantity of gold dust, about £600 worth.[64]

Whether the sum was to be loaned at interest is unclear; in the event news of the proposed transaction reached Kumase and the offender was executed.

VII. THE POLITICAL ECONOMY: AN OVERVIEW

In the course of his visit to Kumase in 1817, Bowdich testified unambiguously to the connection between office and wealth. "The chiefs," he wrote,

> are fed bountifully by the labours of their slaves, and sharing large sums of the revenue (the fines their oppression has imposed on other governments), with incalculable fees for corruption or interference, refine upon the splendour of equipage even to satiety, and still possess a large surplus of income daily accumulating (1819: 335–336).

Bowdich was, however, also aware of the prejudice which existed, on the part of the older aristocratic families whose office estates in land and people had been consolidated during the wars of expansion in the earlier eighteenth century, against the *parvenu* rich whose profits derived principally from trade. Bowdich recorded what was clearly a partisan view of the issue. Of the encouragement of trade he commented,

> their government would repress rather than countenance the inclination (believing no state can be aggrandized but by conquest), lest their genius for war might be enervated by it, and lest, either from the merchants increasing to a body too formidable for their wishes to be resisted, or too artful from their experience to be detected, they might sacrifice the national honour and ambition to their avarice, and furnishing Inta [Gonja], Dagwumba [Dagomba], or any of their more powerful neighbours (who have yielded to circumstances rather than force) with guns and powder (which are never to be exported from Ashantee), break the spell of their conquests, and undermine their powers (1819: 335).

Again, David Hume's general observations on the development of a merchant class are highly pertinent:

> . . . this perhaps is the chief advantage which arises from commerce with strangers. It rouses men from their indolence; and presenting the gayer and more opulent part of the

> nation with objects of luxury, which they never before dreamed of, raises in them a desire of a more splendid way of life than what their ancestors enjoyed. And at the same time, the few merchants, who possess the secret of this importation and exportation, make great profits; and becoming rivals in wealth to the ancient nobility, tempt other adventurers to become their rivals in commerce (Hume, *Of Commerce*, 1752).

Bowdich's report of the views of the Asante nobility appears to echo Hume:

> Were they to encourage commerce, pomp, the idol of which they are most jealous, would soon cease to be their prerogative, because it would be attainable by others; the traders growing wealthy, would vie with them; and for their own security, stimulated by reflections they have now too little at risk to originate, they would unite to repress the arbitrary power of the Aristocracy; and even if they did not, inevitably (as the chiefs conceive) divert the people's genius for war (1819: 336).

The distrust of the trader which clearly still prevailed in the second decade of the nineteenth century—in other words, the preponderance of the imperial over the mercantile outlook (Wilks, 1975: 674)—was to come to an end with the great expansion of trade in the 1830s. The effects of the revolutionary changes in the technology of manufacture in Europe, and in Britain in particular, were not immediately felt in Asante, firstly, because of the restraints upon the distributive trade imposed by the Napoleonic Wars, and secondly, because of the situation of crisis and conflict which prevailed between Asante and the British establishments on the Gold Coast from 1818 until the signing of the Anglo-Asante Treaty of Peace and of Free Commerce of April 27, 1831. The extraordinary expansion of trade after 1831 is illustrated in the graph below; it is compiled from the statistics for the import of cotton manufacture, of British and Irish origin exported from the United Kingdom to the Gold Coast between 1827 and 1841.[65] It is germane to note that in the period under review cotton manufacture accounted for approximately half of all British imports to the Gold Coast, and that the cost per yard fell from 9.16 pence in 1827 to 5.88 pence in 1841.

The impact of the expansion of trade upon the political economy was admirably described by Brodie Cruickshank (1853, II: 30–46), whose observations have been summarized elsewhere (Wilks, 1975: 193–198). It is clear that the Asante state assumed a major role in mediating, as it were, the impact of the industrial revolution upon Asante commercial practice. The matter was one to which the Fante lawyer, J. E. Casely Hayford, drew attention in 1903. In a description which merits quotation at length, he contrasted the flourishing state of the economy prior to the disastrous

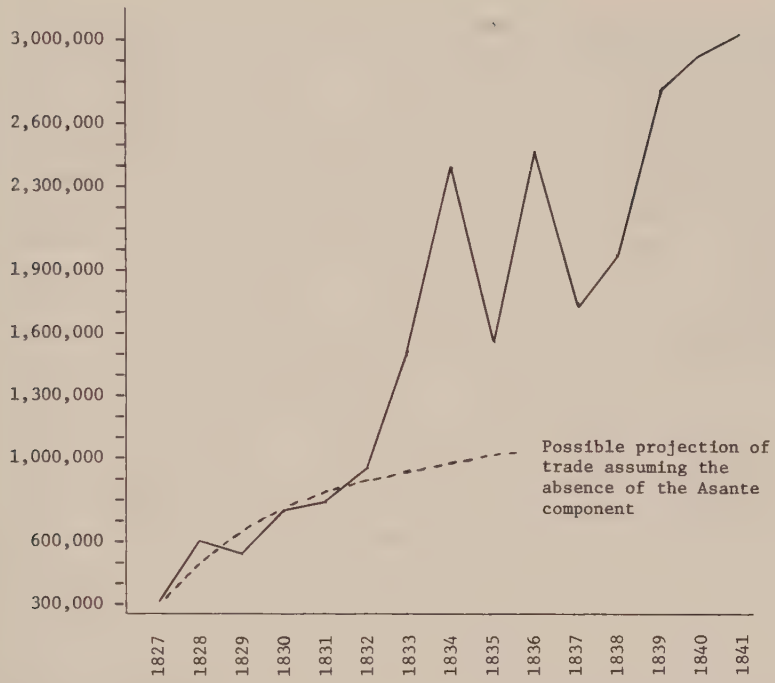

Figure 2. British Imports of Cotton Cloth, of British and Irish Origin, to the Gold Coast, By Yardage and Year.

British invasion of Asante in 1874, with the indifferent state of that economy at the time of writing, seven years after the successful British occupation of Asante in 1896:

> It was part of the State System of Ashanti to encourage trade. The King once in every forty days, at the *Adai* custom, distributed among a number of chiefs various sums of gold dust with a charge to turn the same to good account. These chiefs then sent down to the coast caravans of tradesmen, some of whom would be their slaves, sometimes some two to three hundred strong, to barter ivory for European goods, or buy such goods with gold dust, which the King obtained from the royal alluvial workings. Down to 1873 a constant stream of Ashanti traders might be seen daily wending their way to the coast and back again, yielding more certain wealth and prosperity to the merchants of the Gold Coast and Great Britain than may be expected for some time yet to come from mining industry and railway development put together. The trade Chiefs would, in due course, render a faithful account to the King's stewards, being allowed to retain a fair portion of profit. In the King's household, too, he would have special men who directly traded for him. Important Chiefs carried on the same system of trading with the coast as did the King. Thus every member of the State, from the King downwards,

took an active interest in the promotion of trade and in the keeping open of the trade routes into the interior (1903: 95–96).[66]

A priori, it is arguable that Asante access to cheap manufactured produce on an unprecedented scale after 1831 must have produced growth in the infrastructural system which facilitated commerce. Although quantifiable data are lacking, this is perhaps most apparent in the development of the administrative agencies in Kumase, the *akwammofo, nkwansrafo* and *asokwafo,* which exercised major responsibility for the operation of the great-roads *(akwan-tempon)* that radiated out from the capital. The burden of keeping the roads open, of widening them when necessary, of repairing bridges, and so forth, fell mainly upon the villagers through whose lands the roads passed. By way of return, however, the villagers were able readily to sell surplus produce to travellers on the roads, and consequently enjoyed a degree of prosperity denied to those less advantageously placed. The *akwammofo,* literally "the road-clearing people," inspected the roads when complaints were made by those using them. In the nineteenth century an inspection fee of two fowls and one thirty-second of an ounce of gold was payable by the villagers to the *akwammofo,* who were also empowered to levy on the spot a fine of one eighteenth of an ounce of gold for each "nuisance" (Reindorf, 1895: 138).[67] Occasionally payments from the Treasury were made to villages faced with particularly heavy demands upon their labour; for example, when the complete reconstruction of a road was ordered (Wilks, 1975: 34). Sometimes, too, on a depopulated section of a road the *akwammofo* might establish a camp of labourers from Kumase, recruited presumably from the lowest echelons of the agency (Freeman, 1843: 18). The position of Akwammohene, that is, director of the *akwammofo,* was held by the Apebosohene of Kumase—a ward head within the Gyaasewa division of the administration.

At various points on each of the great-roads the way was physically obstructed by a barrier of felled logs, *si eban.* At these barriers were stationed a group of *nkwansrafo,* or "road guarding people."[68] These functionaries were responsible for the control of all transients: credentials were checked, tolls levied from those subject to payment, wanted criminals and runaway slaves were apprehended, prohibited goods were seized, and so forth (Wilks, 1975: 48–49). The officers responsible for the stations were most commonly recruited from those with records of long and meritorious service in the *nseniefo* and *afenasoafo* (the corps of official heralds and messengers, respectively). They enjoyed very considerable powers, being entitled for example to try Great Oath cases arising at the stations—cases which otherwise should go for trial before the Asantehene's court in Kumase. The functionary in the capital responsible

for the administrative direction of the *nkwansrafo* was the Batafohene, or "head of the trading people." The office of Batafohene was in fact frequently combined with that of Asokwahene, a ward head within the Gyaasewa group who was responsible for the management of the third agency concerned with the great-roads system. This comprised the *asokwafo*, who were involved in the logistics of moving commodities in bulk along the great-roads between Kumase and the distant markets. The *asokwafo* comprised several groups, such as the *ntaherafo* who in their traditional roles served as royal hornblowers and in some cases drummers. It was, indeed, by their use of specific horns and drums that the official status of parties of *asokwafo* travelling the great-roads was made apparent in the villages through which they passed and at the *nkwansrafo* stations at which they were halted.[69]

In considering the operating procedures within the distributive trade network in Asante, a sharp distinction has to be made between retailing and wholesaling aspects. The retail agents were the *adwadifo*. They purchased commodities in bulk, broke bulk, and with the assistance of hawkers known as *mpaafo*, sold their goods from ward to ward in the towns and from village to village in the rural areas. As far as is known, the *adwadifo* worked privately, on their own accounts. Their activities did not proceed within the framework of the great-roads system. The *adwadifo* might of course, as a matter of convenience, use a section of a great-road, but their object was to extend their business network away from the highways and the markets along them, and into the remoter villages and townships. Their activities were of no concern to the *nkwansrafo*, who lacked authority to levy tolls from them. Should the *adwarifo* happen to pass through an *nkwansrafo* station, their credentials were checked, but once their status was satisfactorily established they were permitted to proceed unhindered. Wholesaling operations, by contrast, were in the hands of those known in Twi as the *akwantufo*, that is, "those moving along the (great-) roads." The *akwantufo* included both private and public traders, that is, those operating on their own private accounts and those operating on some form of public money. The two groups may be distinguished by the differential access which they had to the infrastructural support system. First, public traders had free use of the great-roads, whereas private traders had to pay various forms of tolls at the *nkwansrafo* stations through which they passed.[70] Second, the public traders were able to ply the roads with comparatively little impediment, being passed rapidly through the *nkwansrafo* stations; private traders, by contrast, were often subject to lengthy delays as their credentials were checked, and they might indeed be detained at the station for many days in order to allow the public traders to reach the markets earlier and so to take advantage of favorable prices or superior commodities.[71] And third,

it was in theory at least only the public traders who had access to the services of the *asokwafo,* the carriers. (In practice, it was by no means uncommon for a private trader to bribe the *asokwafo* either to carry some of his goods, or to include a number of his own carriers in their party; and, if the device was detected by the *nkwansrafo,* to attempt to bribe them as well.)

Price data for nineteenth-century Asante have not yet been fully compiled. Understanding of the high level at which wealth was formed within the broad class of functionaries and entrepreneurs, however, must rest upon analysis of the profitability of the trade in imported manufactured produce: that is, the difference between the prices paid by the private and public traders—the *akwantufo*—for bulk purchases at the wholesale markets, and those paid by the Asante consumers in the townships and villages for small purchases from the retailers—the *adwadifo* and *mpaafo*. Figures compiled for the earlier nineteenth century show that the markup might then rise as high as 500 to 600 percent on certain commodities (Wilks, 1975: 442–443). The evidence, such as it is, suggests that the benefit of the fall in prices which occurred after 1831 was not passed on to the Asante consumer, but rather contributed to the growing prosperity of the emerging middle class.[72]

Most Asante purchases from the commercial establishments on the Gold Coast were paid for in money—that is, in gold dust—which did not recirculate but which was then converted into bullion for shipment to Europe. It is arguable, then, that the increase in the value of trade with the Coast which occurred after 1831 must have involved a rise in the production of gold or a contraction in the amount of gold in circulation in Asante. It is impossible within the confines of this essay to present the evidence on the matter. The indications are, however, that it was not possible to expand production to a level that adequately shielded the economy from the effect of the constant loss of specie through the external trade, and that money was therefore frequently in short supply in Asante. It has been the argument of this essay that money in circulation tended in any case to accumulate in the hands of a relatively small class of functionaries and entrepreneurs, and, by the operation especially of the system of death duties, ultimately to accrue to the Treasury.

One sector of the gold-mining industry in Asante was under public control: there are numerous references to "royal" mines and washings (Wilks, 1975: 435–436). The other, and probably major, sector was one of essentially family production. It involved the farmer, in those times of the year when no labour was needed on the field, and with the use of no labour other than that of his family, in operating small washings on the streams and sometimes in sinking shallow pits into the alluvium. It was precisely at this level—not only of the production of gold but also of the

collection of kola (and later rubber) and, on a limited scale, ivory—that the rural economy was articulated with the external trade; for it was in quest of just these commodities that the *adwadifo* and *mpaafo* hawked from village to village their Manchester cloth and other European manufacture. The Asante villager, then, had access to the products of European capitalist manufacture. That access, however, was locked into the apparatus of what Casely Hayford called "the state System of Ashanti." Regular marketplaces in Asante were conspicuous by their absence:

> the natives of the forest country, being never grouped in large masses, and residing chiefly in farm villages, have comparatively little occasion for extensive and well-arranged markets. . . . I never saw or heard of a good public market in any part of the country either within the protected territories [i.e. of the Gold Coast], or in Ashantee. Coomassie is no exception to this general rule, and possesses nothing deserving the name of a market. . . .[73]

The Asante villager, the producer and consumer *par excellence* within society, had only the option of purchasing goods at the inflated prices at which they were offered him by the hawkers. That he consistently exercised this option, and thereby sustained the national economy, reflected *his* distinctive perception of wealth: that the situation was to his advantage when, without removing any labour necessary for the cultivation of the field, he could utilize the (in one sense) surplus labour of himself and his family to procure a supply of luxury goods.

It was a consequence of the pattern of production and consumption which arose in the villages, that no significant accumulation of wealth occurred at that level. The surplus labour of the villager was appropriated through a system of unequal exchange, and not for the most part through any direct forms of taxation and death duties (though see Fortes, 1969: 148–149). It was also a consequence of the pattern which emerged (though one requiring an extended treatment not within the scope of this essay), that the shortage of money within the rural economy left the villager highly exposed in the matter of debt. Numerous cases are on record from the nineteenth century of fines imposed upon villagers by central government courts, which were fixed at levels appropriate to the wealthy citizens of the towns but not to the rural producer. It is possible, very tentatively, to quantify the inequality. A villager, with his family, panning for gold might typically produce of the order of a half pennyweight, or one fortieth of an ounce of gold, a day.[74] Although the price of Manchester cloth to the villagers is not precisely known, in the mid-nineteenth century it probably approximated one thirty-sixth of an ounce; that is, a day's labour might very approximately yield in exchange a yard of cloth.[75] Court fines—imposed for a wide range of offences, insulting a

royal messenger, witchcraft, farming on land without authority, and so forth—were seldom fixed below one peregwan (or 2.25 ounces), which was indeed considered very light![76] In such circumstances payment of the fine became the responsibility of the transgressor's lineage, which was frequently obligated either to sell or mortgage *(awowa)* some of its land and, commonly, people. In this way lineage property became alienated to wealthy functionaries and entrepreneurs in the towns: a process to which reference has been made above. In the ninetheenth century—as in the twentieth—rural indebtedness was in part a product of the irresistibility of luxury goods available via the towns.

The Asante government, it has been argued, attempted to maximize the benefits of industrial production—the relative low costs and (frequently) superior quality of manufactured goods—within the framework of the pre-capitalist state. The many personal fortunes made, whether by direct participation in trade or by the exercise of office within the administration, continued to be regarded as falling under the imperative of the *Sika Mena*—the Golden Elephant Tail—and the system of death duties remained the device *par excellence* for sustaining that imperative. Conversely, the growing opposition to death duties became manifest initially in the tactics of evasion, of which examples have been given.

In 1856 it was possible for the Dutch Governor at Elmina to identify "the appropriation of inheritances" as one of the two principal abuses of individual rights in Asante; the other was the executions carried out at major public festivals.[77] It has been argued elsewhere that the emergence of an organized middle class opposition to the Asantehene Mensa Bonsu (1874–1883) and his successor Kwaku Dua Kuma (1884) was one of the major factors in the internecine struggles which brought the nation to the verge of collapse between 1884 and 1888, and which paved the way for the British military occupation in 1896 (Wilks, 1975: 699–705, 711–717; Wilks, 1975 b, *passim*). The matter was succinctly alluded to by Kwadwo Fori in 1930, who, in a petition to the British Chief Commissioner against the reintroduction of death duties, remarked:

> I have the honour most respectfully beg to bring before you the following news and that I am a business man and a citizen of Ashanti but owing to certain laws laid down in former times whereby the king or chief was entitled to take hold of properties of deceased which consequently brought about a war between the Ashantees, the Kokofus and Juabens which resulted the down-fall of the nation and the people were obliged to flee to the coast.[78]

The civil war came effectively to an end with the election of Agyeman Prempe to the Golden Stool in 1888. It is of significance that in order to obtain the support necessary to assume the government of the war-torn

country, the new Asantehene was obliged to take an oath renouncing his right to levy death duties.[79] The imperative of the *Sika Mena* was much weakened but not destroyed: it was presumably at this time that the Asantehene introduced a new annual headtax to defray the costs of his administration.[80] The topic of death duties, however, could continue to agitate the nation as late as 1930, as Arhin has shown in his informative paper on the matter (Arhin, 1974: *passim*).

In this essay an attempt has been made to survey the role of wealth in the Asante political economy, and to characterize the nature of the value system within which the transcendent interest of the nation—the Asanteman—in all self-acquired property was conceived. Attention has also again been drawn to the fact that this transcendent interest, expressed in the imperative of the *Sika Mena*, did not remain unchallenged in the nineteenth century, and that the efforts of an increasingly wealthy middle class to liberate itself from the restraints of the traditional state must be seen as one of the major, but still neglected, themes of Asante history. It must, however, also be seen as one of the major themes of modern Ghanaian politics, for the failure of a fully formed capitalist ethic to emerge under the aegis of the colonial regime or the first and second republics is quite apparent; many of the ways of looking at money, commerce, land, office, investment and consumption described in this essay for nineteenth-century Asante are still important determinants of behaviour in late twentieth century Ghana, and constitute a set of constraints upon the emergence of a capitalist order. The problem, *vide* Kwame Nkrumah and others, of whether a society such as that of Ghana may circumvent, by whatever route, the full development of a capitalism—whether as a system of production or a system of values—is beyond the scope of this essay. What is clear, however, is that the syndrome of, loosely, production for export and import for consumption was as characteristic of the nineteenth-century Asante economy as of the twentieth century Ghanaian one—and in each case underpins the existence of a wealthy entrepreneurial and official class within society.

FOOTNOTES

1. Early versions of his essay were read at The Johns Hopkins University on April 23, and at Brown University on April 24, 1973. I am grateful to those present on both occasions for many helpful comments.

2. National Archives of Ghana, Accra, ADM. 11/1483: letter to Brandford Griffith, dd. Cape Coast, December 15, 1894, and see further Wilks, 1975a, p. 59: "In this vast country Gold alone is King."

3. These aphorisms, or variants of them, may all be found in Christaller, 1879, see Nos. 2960, 2945, 838, 841; and in Rattray, 1916, Nos. 648, 656, 434, 437.

4. Gold Coast Colony Ordinance No. 9 of 1889, dd. April 12, 1889; proclaimed October 31, 1889.

5. Small amounts of gold dust were "prepackaged" in pieces of cloth and usually accepted on trust. Nevertheless, there was sufficient spillage in the retail market places for the authorities to turn it to their advantage. Legislation made it an offence to retrieve gold dropped in the market, the soil of which was then periodically washed by officers of the Treasury. Bowdich (1819: 257, 320) reported that this had been done in Kumase twice between 1804 and 1817, and that on each occasion about 800 ounces of gold had been retrieved.

6. Royal Anthropological Institute, London: MS Bundle 203, Gold Coast No. 314, dd. June 24, 1908, enclosing C. H. Armitage, "Native Laws and Customs, Ashanti," dd. May 27, 1908, p. 22. The colonial authorities reduced the maximum interest rate to 50 percent per year.

7. Institute of African Studies, Legon, IASAS/199: Akropong Stool History, recorded by J. Agyeman-Duah, March 13, 1967. One is reminded of the trial of the corpse of Pope Formosus (891–896); his election as pope was found invalid and his body thrown into the Tiber.

8. Instituut voor Taal-Land- en Volkenkunde, Leiden, MS. H. 509: De Heer's diary, entry for March 19, 1867.

9. See for example, Bowdich, 1819, pp. 334–335: "Gold they are all desirous of hoarding . . . "

10. See Christaller, 1879, Nos. 917, 2938; Rattray, 1916, Nos. 649, 652.

11. National Archives of Ghana, Accra, ADM. 11/1338: Enquiry into the Adonten Stool, by C. Furness Smith, Acting Crown Counsel, March 24, 1925, Notes of Evidence.

12. A major source for these are the Asante court records, Manhyia Record Office, Kumase.

13. National Archives of Ghana, Kumase, D. 234: nine Adanse chiefs to Commissioner, Southern Province, Asante, dd. Fomena, November 30, 1906.

14. Christaller, 1879, No. 50; Rattray, 1916, No. 311.

15. Institute of African Studies, Legon, IASAS/61: Juansa Stool History, recorded by J. Agyeman-Duah, April 30, 1963 [spelling revised].

16. For a fuller account of Yamoa Ponko's career, see ACBP/pcs/60 in *Asantesem*, No. 9, June 1978, pp. 28–32. The case may be instructively compared with that of Yaw Nkyera, Pampasohene, whose painfully slow progress towards a modest level of wealth is documented in ACBP/pcs/34, see *Asante Seminar*, No. 5, November 1976, pp. 10–13.

17. National Archives of Ghana, Accra, ADM. 11/1336: Chief Commissioner Maxwell to Acting Colonial Secretary, Accra, dd. Kumase, June 1924.

18. Institute of African Studies, Legon, IASAS/12: Dadiesoaba Stool History, recorded by J. Agyeman-Duah, January 19, 1963.

19. National Archives of Ghana, Accra, ADM. 11/1336: Chief Commissioner to Colonial Secretary, dd. Kumase, September 27, 1924.

20. National Archives of Ghana, Kumase, D. 102: Kwame Kyem to Acting Chief Commissioner, dd. Kumase, June 19, 1916.

21. National Archives of Ghana, Kumase, D. 94: Kwame Kyem to Chief Commissioner, dd. Kumase, March 1, 1915.

22. National Archives of Ghana, Kumase, D. 111: Acting District Commissioner, Kumase, to Chief Commissioner, dd. January 15, 1934.

23. Bodleian Library, Oxford, Rhodes House MSS British Empire, s. 344: Memorandum by Chief Commissioner Harper, dd. 1922.

24. National Archives of Ghana, Kumase, D. 525: Statement by Head Chief Kwasi Nuama and Head Chief Kwabena Kokofu, n.d. but 1921.

25. Christaller, 1879, Nos. 1346, 1354; Rattray, 1916, Nos. 622, 627.

26. The protypical case of Yamoa Ponko, referred to above, may again be cited. Yamoa Ponko requested, as the ultimate seal of approval of his career, that the Asantehene in person should preside over his funeral rites, see ACBP/pcs/60, in *Asantesem*, No. 9, June 1978, pp. 28–32. The request was approved.

27. See Christaller, 1879, No. 1345; Rattray, 1916, No. 620.

28. See Bowdich, 1819, pp. 306, 317, 318, 319, 376.

29. Cf. also, Bowdich, 1821, p. 18; 1821 a, p. 55.

30. Cf. the 'rising captains', Bowdich, 1819, p. 295.

31. Djan, 1936, p. 114, offers a useful definition of *sikafo:* "By this is meant rich men who own large estates, and are capable of granting large loans; in ancient times they owned many slaves. All Sikafo are highly respected, so long as it is known in the community that they obtained their riches by honest means and hard work."

32. See Rattray, 1927, p. 246 and Figure 134, No. 12.

33. ACBP/pcs/20, *Asante Seminar*, No. 4, February 1976, p. 6. See also, *Wesleyan-Methodist Magazine*, October 1862, p. 954: visit of West and Owusu Ansa to Kumase, journal entry for March 26, 1862.

34. National Archives of Ghana, Accra, ADM. 11/1338: Enquiry into the Adonten Stool, by C. Furness Smith, 24 March 1925, evidence of Akyeamehene Kwasi Nuama.

35. This title is recorded at the very beginning of the seventeenth century by De Marees, who glosses it, "nobleman" (1912: 174–177 and 255). See also Müller, 1673, "Vocabula," Ch. IX, *Brimpung*, "a superior rich man," and Ch. XVIII, *Brimpung*, "rich." The second element *pon* means "big"; the first element may be from *barima*, "man."

36. See Manhyia Record Office, Kumase: Kwaku Addai vs. Kofi Aidoo, case commencing February 13, 1929.

37. National Archives of Ghana, Accra, ADM. 11/1338: Enquiry into the Adonten Stool, by C. Furness Smith, 24 March 1925, pp. 77–78, evidence of Akyeamehene Kwasi Nuama.

38. Hutchison's Diary, entry for November 14, 1817, in Bowdich, 1819, p. 395. Compare, National Archives of Ghana, Kumase, D. 221, Petition from Odumasehemaa Yaa Danse et al. to Provincial Commissioner, Western Province of Asante, dd. Odumase, May 13, 1927. The petitioners recounted the case of a Bantama subject long resident in Gyaman, who became wealthy: "he feared to go to Kumasi to show his richness there for fear of being deprived of all by Ashanti King . . . "

39. For the career of Kwasi Brantuo, see ACBP/pcs/51, in *Asantesem*, No. 7, June 1977, pp. 14–17.

40. *Wesleyan-Methodist Magazine*, October 1862, pp. 955–956: visit of W. West and John Owusu Ansa to Kumase, diary for March 29, 1862.

41. Ibid., diary entry for March 30, 1862.

42. Manhyia Record Office, Kumase: Kwaku Addai vs. Kofi Aidoo, case commencing February 13, 1929.

43. For the career of Opoku Frefre, see ACBP/pcs/1, in *Asante Seminar*, No. 1, March 1975, pp. 7–9.

44. Hutchison's Diary, entry for November 14, 1817, in Bowdich, 1819, p. 395.

45. Manhyia Record Office, Kumase: J. K. Edubofuor vs. C. E. Osei, case commencing December 21, 1939, evidence of C. E. Osei, January 31, 1940.

46. See, for example, Institute of African Studies, Legon, IASAS/166: Offuman Stool History, recorded by J. Agyeman-Duah, February 23, 1966.

47. National Archives of Ghana, Accra, ADM. 11/1338: Enquiry into the Adonten Stool, op. cit., pp. 77–78.

48. Bowdich, 1819, p. 295. Compare also, pp. 39, 58, 275, 276, 277, 294.

49. Royal Anthropological Institute, London: MS Bundle 203, Gold Coast No. 314, op. cit.

50. Christaller, 1879, No. 3029; Rattray, 1916, No. 89.

51. See Kyerematen, 1964, p. 48.

52. See, for example, Manhyia Record Office, Kumase: J. K. Edubofuor vs. C. E. Osei, case commencing December 21, 1939, pp. 10–11.

53. National Archives of Ghana, Accra, 11/1338: Enquiry into the Adonten Stool, op. cit., p. 78.

54. *Sika Mmara* and *Sika Mmra* are also met as alternative forms of *Sika Mena*.

55. And also by extension, *Osagyefo,* "the one who takes in war."

56. For example, Asantehene Osei Tutu appointed one of his grandsons custodian of his *sika mena*, with the office of Ahoprafohene, see Institute of African Studies, Legon, IASAS/143: Ahubrafoo Stool History, recorded by J. Agyeman-Duah, 30 November 1964; Wilks, field notes, interview with Ohenenana Kofi Kakari, dd. November 25, 1973. Asantehene Opoku Ware appointed one of his sons custodian of his *sika mena,* with the office of Ahwerewamuhene, see Institute of African Studies, Legon, IASAS/140: Ahwerewamu Stool History, recorded by J. Agyeman-Duah, November 30, 1964. The first Manwerehene Kwasi Brantuo was given custody of the *sika mena* of Asantehene Kwaku Dua Panin, see *Asantesem*, No. 7, June 1977, ACBP/pcs/51, p. 15. This may have been the *sika mena* which, after the death of Kwasi Brantuo, passed into the custody of Pampasohene Asare. If so, its subsequent history is recounted in Manhyia Record Office, Kumase, Osei Yaw vs. Kofi Asamoa, case commencing December 18, 1926.

57. ACBP/pcs/3: Kwame Butuakwa, Career Period IV, paragraph 1, in *Asante Seminar*, No. 2, April 1975, pp. 5–7.

58. National Archives of Ghana, Accra, ADM. 11/1338: Report on Enquiry into the Tribal Organization of the Adonten Abrempon of Kumase, by C. Furness Smith, dd. March 25, 1925: Notes of Evidence 1924–1925, p. 61, evidence of Adontenhene Kwame Frimpon, and p. 79, evidence of Akyeamehene Kwasi Nuama. The testimony of Kwame Frimpon and Kwasi Nuama differs somewhat from that of Okyeame Baffour Osei Akoto at a later date, see Arhin, 1974, pp. 63–64 and 82, note 2.

59. See Christaller, 1879, No. 2950; Rattray, 1916, No. 658. This maxim was first reported by H. N. Riis in 1854.

60. For Opoku Frefre, see ACBP/pcs/1, in *Asante Seminar*, No. 1, March 1975, pp. 7–9; Adum Ata, ACBP/pcs/25, in *Asante Seminar,* No. 4, February 1976, pp. 14–19; Kwadwo Adusei, ACBP/pcs/22, in *Asante Seminar,* No. 5, November 1976, pp. 5–9.

61. For Asante Agyei, see ACBP/pcs/6, *Asante Seminar*, No. 3, June 1975, pp. 5–7.

62. See the reports of the earlier case in Manhyia Record Office, Kumase, Penin Kwame Enin vs. Sodohene Kofi Mainoo, case commencing 3 November 1929.

63. Petition from Kofi Sraha et al. to Chief Commissioner, dd. Kumase, October 11, 1930, in Arhin, 1974, p. 78. Compare also *The African Times*, XXXVII, No. 422, November 2, 1896, p. 164, reporting that in Kumase every man of substance was buried with gold to the value of £1,000 to £5,000. "Its whereabouts is only known to a few. When it is buried the slave who digs the hole is killed and buried with it and so can tell no tales."

64. British Parliamentary Papers, *Further Correspondence regarding Affairs of the Gold Coast*, C. 3386, 1882, p. 40: Watt to Acting Colonial Secretary, dd. Cape Coast, February 2, 1882.

65. British Parliamentary Papers, C. 551-II, 1842, *Report from the Select Committee on the West Coast of Africa*, Part II, Appendix. Mr. Larry Yarak first convinced me of the crucial importance of the expansion of trade after 1831 for an understanding of the subsequent development of the Asante political economy; I am grateful to him for so readily sharing his insights.

66. This account should be compared with that of the practice, specifically under Asantehene Kofi Kakari, given in Boyd, 1874, pp. 109–110.

67. From the amount of revenue accruing from such fines (as much as 3,000 peregwans annually according to Reindorf) it might seem that—rather like parking tickets today—many villagers preferred to infringe the law and risk payment of a fine.

68. Also known as the *nkwansifo*, or "the people placed on the road," and as *abansifo*, "the people placed at the fence."

69. In times of war the operations of the *asokwafo* were supplemented by those of another group, the *anantafo*, who were specifically concerned with the transportation of munitions; their head was the Anantahene of Kumase.

70. A toll system was in operation when Bowdich visited Kumase; thus he referred to "customs paid in gold by all traders returning from the coast, levied near Ansa in Assin" (1819: 320).

71. See Rattray's comment on this matter, "there was always competition to carry a chief's kola, because thereby the carriers had access to the early market for any surplus which they chose to carry" (1929: 111).

72. Before 1873 profits from the northern trade in non-manufactured commodities were realized at extraordinarily high levels: for example, sheep purchased in Salaga were sold in Asante at a 2,000 percent profit, and an unfree male at between 1,200 and 1,600 percent. See Basel Mission Archives, Special Files: David Asante's report on his journey to Salaga in 1877, dd. September 19, 1878.

73. *The Western Echo*, I, No. 10, February 24, 1868, p. 8, reporting the observations of T. B. Freeman whose acquaintance with Asante commenced in 1839 and was to extend over three decades.

74. See, for example, Bowler, 1911, pp. 101–102; *The African Times*, XXXVII, No. 421, October 1, 1896.

75. This figure is calculated on the sterling value of gold as 72/- an ounce; on the cost of Manchester cloth to Asante traders on the Gold Coast as 5d. a yard; and on a sales price in the village of 2/- a yard.

76. See, for example, Manhyia Record Office, Kumase: Kwabena Tando vs. Afua Yeboaa, October 20, 1917; Kwasi Kwaakye vs. Yaw Mensa, June 25, 1928; Kwadwo Nketia vs. Kwabena Domfe, June 14, 1928; Yaw Mensa vs. Kwadwo Apea Agyei, May 19, 1938. All these cases refer back to fines imposed by courts in the nineteenth century.

77. General State Archives, The Hague, NBKG 395: Schomerus to Ministry of Colonies, dd. Elmina, June 28, 1856.

78. Kwadwo Fori to Chief Commissioner, dd. Kumase, October 10, 1930, in Arhin, 1974, p. 76.

79. Kwabena Nketia and twelve others to Chief Commissioner, dd. Kumase, 14 February 1908, in Arhin, 1974, p. 70; and Kofi Sraha and thirty-eight others to Chief Commissioner, dd. Kumase, October 11, 1930, in Arhin, 1974, p. 77.

80. Manhyia Record Office, Kumase: Asantehene Agyeman Prempe to District Commissioner, dd. Kumase, October 26, 1927. The tax was set at one tenth ounce of gold from every married man, that is, presumably from every head of household.

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